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Keep It Out

Last February, Admiral William F. Raborn, then director of the Central Intelligence Agency, in an appearance before a Senate committee was asked by Senator J. W. Fulbright whether the CIA had ever used the student exchange program as a cover for U.S. agents.

Adm. Raborn declined to answer. His reason was that the question went to the "source and methods" of the agency's intelligence operations rather than to "substantive intelligence." He said the law wouldn't permit him to answer such a question if Mr. Fulbright asked it. Later, apparently forgetting his explanation, he said on a television program that his answer to Mr. Fulbright's question had been "no."

Adm. Raborn left the CIA and was succeeded by Richard Helms. The other day, Mr. Helms told Mr. Fulbright's foreign relations committee that the student exchange program has not been used as a CIA cover. He also said no CIA agents have been planted in the Peace Corps.

We certainly hope not. The student exchange program was the creation of Sen. Fulbright at the end of World war II. The Peace Corps was launched by President Kennedy. Those programs have been of great value to the world, to the United States and to the individuals who have participated. They have contributed to the kind of image America needs; they are the kind of program Americans can be proud of. It would be tragic for them to be contaminated by the spy organization. The CIA should be kept out of programs that have good reputations.